

OLD HOUSE AT STIDD, NEAR RIBCHESTER,

INTENDED FOR FOUR FAMILIES.*



THE BRITISH LINEN COMPANY'S BANK, EDINBURGH.

AMONGST the most important and costly buildings added to Edinburgh lately is the British Linen Company's Bank in St. Andrew's-square, from the hands of Mr. Bryce. On the first view the façade presents, from its great altitude, high degree of ornamentation, and row of terminal statues (seen above the middle against the sky), a novel aspect. I cannot avoid thinking, however, that more should have been done to make it more even-day than an architect, in a first-class public building to design, it is seldom that a fine site is available; and rarely indeed does he obtain access to some 30,000*l.* for the development of his ideas: even he does so he ought to take pains and do his best; if he fail he is amenable to public criticism.

The ground story is brought forward and formed into a high, rusticated basement for a hexastyle Corinthian ordonnance above. The columns being detached, the front rooms on the ground floor must suffer from the great thickness of the wall entailed by the projection for their support. However, Milford says,—"Magnificence must be paid for in convenience as well as money." The doorway occupies the centre of the five bays, and has, in common with the windows throughout, dressings of the ordinary description—excellently membered, it is true, but incontestably of the most hackneyed form. For the second-floor windows the stereotyped triangular pediment is used—a feature whose propriety has been often questioned, but the distressing repetition of which seems to indicate a sterile fecundity of imagination among architects. The building in question is the third in the square (and there are others throughout the city) by the same architect, in which those precious pediment dressings appear on the second-floor windows. What would be thought of an author who introduced the same chapter into half-a-dozen essays on different subjects?

The details are mostly well drawn; but I cannot extend commendation to the choice and disposition of the characterising features. The high basement seems to be a favourite of Mr. Bryce's, though it detracts much from the dignity of the ordonnance, and militates against the unity of the whole. We are not aware of any advantage secured by its

adoption, as the ordonnance, it seems to have induced an altitude extravagant for the length of the façade, and the painful sacrifice of a continuous entablature for one broken over each column,—a practice reprobated by the best writers. "Everything," says Professor Hosking, "tending to break the leading lines in a composition should be avoided;" and, alluding to the abuse in question, he says, "it makes the ordonnance,"—what should be the gist of the composition, "a mere excrescence."

... the practice of making heavy cornices to support columnar ordonnances is injudicious. . . . "The upper and crowning cornice, if in proportion to its own ordonnance, must be disproportioned to the whole elevation, which takes from that member a character of meanness, as it may or may not be fitted to its whole height." The cornice adopted in this instance is not the legitimate one of the order, from which it differs greatly in size and in having modillions. To some observers Mr. Ritchie's six statues may constitute an attraction, but their position is as fatal to the appreciation of their merits as it is injudicious in reference to the overloaded columns below.

I shall have something more to say.

CAUSTIC.

RAGGED SCHOOLS, HOLLOWAY.—On Wednesday, the foundation-stone of a ragged school was laid in Brand-street, Holloway. Honorary architect, Mr. James Harrison. It is in the Tudor style, and will have a residence for the master and mistress. The dimensions of the building are—depth 50 feet, breadth 25 feet, extreme height 48 feet. The school-rooms will accommodate 600 children of both sexes. The interior is to have an open timber roof.

THE PARIS EXHIBITION of works of living artists is fixed to commence on the 15th of December next. Englishmen will be allowed to exhibit on exactly the same conditions as natives, provided their works be declared of sufficient merit by a jury nominated by the artists themselves.

LAW DECISION ON SALE BY AUCTION.—At Wolverhampton lately, the County Court consulted an auctioneer, as plaintiff, in a case wherein the defendant refused to pay for a boat knocked down to him while the auctioneer was standing on another, for which the defendant argued in evidence that he had meant to bid.

BIRMINGHAM ASSESSMENT.

BEING SURVEYORS.

SEVERAL correspondents are very anxious that we should point out, with reference to the tenders for assessing and mapping Birmingham,† that architects, surveyors, and valuers can be just as blind on an occasion as builders, and they seem to think that we are disposed also to be blind for once, and overlook the absurd discrepancies which appeared in the tenders in question.

... the discrepancies are, indeed, most striking and distressing. We find one well-known respectable professional man asking 10,850*l.* for making the assessment which another individual is willing to undertake (after a fashion) for 400*l.*; and while one puts down 1,935*l.* for the map, there is another who wildly offers to do it for 50*l.*

The fact is, the majority of those who tendered on that occasion knew nothing about the matter, and had no means of obtaining correct information as to the trouble it would involve. They made a guess, trusted to chance to bring them out of it, and deserve reprehension for their pains. In making their selection, the board should remember that a cheap assessment in the first instance may be a very dear one ultimately: they ought to appoint a man of known ability and reputation, and should pay him properly, that the work may be properly done.

The guardians have since resolved that tenders exceeding 2,000*l.* should not be entertained, and selected the following eight from the competitors for further consideration,—viz., Messrs. G. Dyke, Leveridge and Corfield, G. Thompson, Hebbert and Fausch, J. D. Paine, I. Newey, C. W. Robertson, and P. Gannon.

SHIP CANAL THROUGH CENTRAL AMERICA.—We perceive that a convention between Great Britain and the United States relative to the establishment of a communication by ship canal between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans has been signed at Washington and ratified. We hope, however, that the statement of our Bahama correspondent, Captain Nelson, of the Royal Engineers, in our impression of 27th July last, will not be disregarded.

† See p. 404.

* See page 409 in our present number.